The sky’s the limit

The Muriel Pollia Sculpture Garden takes art at the University of La Verne to a higher level
Completion of $42 Million Campaign is Not The End, But a Beginning

This past New Year’s Eve signified more than just the close of the 2008 calendar year. It also marked the official conclusion to our $42 million Building on Excellence Campaign, a historic fundraising effort that set new standards in giving at the University of La Verne.

In this issue of VOICE magazine you will read about visions realized, landmarks achieved, and the incredible generosity of so many who made this campaign such an unparalleled success. In this message, as well as during the 2009 President’s Dinner Gala Event on Feb. 28 at Fairplex, I want to express my gratitude to every person, company and organization that helped us attain this monumental accomplishment.

Still, we must recognize that the conclusion of the campaign isn’t so much a successful ending as it is a promising beginning with more to be done. It is fine to enjoy the completion of such a tremendous effort, but congratulations should not be misconstrued as satisfaction. This is just another step in the progress of this university.

While we have enhanced our image and our offerings, for La Verne to remain a viable, competitive educational choice we must continue to improve what we have and what we provide. The latest technology, revised curriculum, expanded facilities and updated resources are all needed to attract outstanding students. And with the economic situation now facing not only our region but the entire country, furnishing financial assistance to help maintain accessibility to higher education is vital to our purpose as an institution.

Winston Churchill once referred to progress as “an ever-lengthening, ever-ascending, ever-improving path. You know you will never get to the end of the journey. But this, so far from discouraging, only adds to the joy and glory of the climb.”

I hope you will join us as we continue along the path to a bright future for the University of La Verne and its essential educational mission.

Steve Morgan ’68
President, University of La Verne
Editor's Note

Taking Time To Reflect on a Great Achievement

What is that cool-looking thing on the cover?

It’s called “Inhale/Exhale,” a sculpture by Phillip K. Smith of Indio, and while it looks real, for now, the cover of the Voice is the only place you’ll find it. Soon, however, it will be standing tall — 54-feet tall — on the University of La Verne campus.

The piece is one component of the Muriel Pollia Sculpture Garden, which will complement the new Abraham Campus Center building at the heart of the La Verne campus.

If you’ve been on campus during the past five years, you’ve seen your share of blueprints and backhoes, hard hats and hammers — all signs of progress in the transformation of the university to meet the needs of the future.

Come back in the fall and you’ll see “Inhale/Exhale” for real, standing next to a newly opened Campus Center building, adjacent to the new Frank & Nadine Johnson Family Plaza, next to the renovated Sports Science & Athletics Pavilion.

Not to be lost in the dust and din of construction is the all-important reason for the commotion — serving the needs of the students of the future.

That happens on different levels, of course, and while the Campus Center Project was in the midst of fundraising and then construction, some pretty amazing things were going on elsewhere around the University of La Verne.

We’ve chronicled some of these milestones in this issue of the Voice, and woven them into the celebration of the Building on Excellence Campaign, Campus Center Project, and the new art on campus. These will be a source of pride for generations to come.

Read on and see how far we’ve come in the past five years. It’s been an unprecedented outpouring of support by an unheard of number of supporters. Of that we can all be proud.

Rusty Evans
Editor
Singing the praises of Ahmed Ispahani

The current feature of Dr. Ahmed Ispahani in the Voice is so ironic. Not only have I been thinking of him so strongly for the past several months, I told my wife that I was going to write and relay what an impact he had on me and how he changed the direction of my life.

I was a transfer student from Mt. SAC to La Verne the first year he taught there. I had no direction, having completed my military service sandwiched in between attending Mt. SAC, I transferred to La Verne looking for inspiration and an education where I did more than study to pass a test.

Then Ahmed Ispahani happened to me. I can’t put a name to it, you just inspired me and I can’t describe in words what you specifically did that lit the fire, I just know how it felt. All of a sudden, I was a sponge. I couldn’t get enough of the various classes I took from you. Never before had I done any of the recommended reading that other teachers had listed, but your list became additional items on the menu for me.

You turned me from a 2.0, 16-unit student into my best semester at 24 units @ 3.95 grade-point average. More importantly, I was learning, not just passing tests, and, most importantly, I was loving it. The only A+ I ever got was from you.

I fondly remember our tiny classes, one being eight students. Your approach was so relaxed and informal, it felt more like friends getting together to discuss a mutual interest than a college class. Maybe I felt that way because you were not so much older than myself but you always maintained the teacher-student relationship that served me so well in my later years as a manager. Close, friendly team member but always the boss.

Not only did you give me a thirst for knowledge, somehow you gave me a focus on how to direct my life in my future pursuits in employment. Additionally, you provided me with a direction that has given me untold pleasure in following economics locally, nationally and internationally.

I had always had a strong work ethic, but you provided the fire that allowed me to excel almost to the point of fanaticism. It was a good 10 years after graduation that I found I needed to slow down and enjoy the many other blessings our Lord provided me other than the thirst for excellence in my work.

Graduation was on a Saturday, I went to work for Mobil Oil on Monday and was married the following Saturday (coming up on our 43rd year). That pace just seemed to be normal after being so driven through you and your classes.

While my career with Mobil only lasted nine years, with a meteoric rise through the management ranks (refusal of a promotion to New York caused my resignation) later years of self-employment and finally 17 years of public service employment with a non-profit ended a couple of years ago in retirement, thoroughly enjoying nearly every working day of my career.

Dr. Ispahani, what I am really trying to say here is thank you! You meant so much to me. I knew it at the time but my appreciation for what you did for me only grew through the years.

I told them how I hated to miss Dr. Ispahani’s classes for two reasons:

1) I loved the classes, the active learning and the fun he made it, and

2) The day after I would miss a class of his, I knew that Dr. Ispahani would greet me during attendance role call with “Troy – Where were you yesterday? We missed you!”

The executives couldn’t believe a professor took that kind of interest in their college students.

My family (wife and four kids) live in Colorado now (been here for 16 years). I actually visited the ULV campus last year with my wife and oldest son who is looking at universities to attend in the Fall of 2009. My ULV advisor and good friend for all these years, Rita Thakur gave my son, wife and I a tour of the university and we met with Steve Morgan.

I thought I would let Dr. Ispahani know that I too think of him as a beloved ULV professor and apply what I was taught by him in my role as Vice President for a mid-sized publisher (now going on 16 years with this organization). My wife is an inventor of a patented product so I help run her international business with your teachings as well. Thanks for your dedication, teaching style and lessons that last a lifetime. Congrats on your recognition!

Troy Stromme ’86

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the Voice article “Making Dollars Make Sense” and even after being out of Dr. Ispahani’s classes for nearly 23 years, it brought back fond memories. I have applied much of what he taught in business economics over my many years in the business field. I graduated in 1986 in Business and received the “Business Student of the Year Award” that year.

Before this article came out, I was telling several executives in our organization about my college experience — Dr. Ispahani, Dr. Rita Thakur and La Verne. I shared how dedicated the University was about actually teaching the students real life lessons beyond book knowledge.

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Troy Stromme ’86

Two excellent articles in the most recent Voice: Ort and Dr. Ahmed Ispahani. Both men have made a great lifetime contribution to the university and I feel very fortunate to have known them both. I especially enjoyed my
class with Dr. Ispahani — he made what could be a confusing subject very easy to understand — I always looked forward to attending his next lecture. Keep up the good work!

Kendall Hanshaw ’69

University of La Verne Law Review

I enjoyed reading this issue of the Voice, and particularly the focus on the clinics at the College of Law. I’m not sure how you decide what topics to cover in each issue about each of the graduate schools, but if you are looking for the next College of Law topic, I hope you might consider putting the spotlight on the University of La Verne Law Review.

The Law Review is the sole scholarly publication of the University of La Verne, and it has undergone a great transformation in the past few years. Two or three years ago it was a small student activity (fewer than 25 students); it published almost exclusively the work of its own students, and it rarely did that in a timely fashion. Since 2007 it has been transformed from the Journal of Juvenile Law into the University of La Verne Law Review, has begun publishing two issues a year, and now publishes the work of a number of outside scholars in each issue, on cutting-edge subjects.

It has also become a vibrant student organization, with 38 members chosen through a highly-selective process. I could tell you much more, but I’ll wait to see if this is something in which you might have an interest.

Thanks!

Diane Klein
Associate Professor
University of La Verne College of Law

La Verne victims of 1960 racism reunited after their story is told in Voice magazine

November is a time of thanksgiving, a time when friends and families reunite to renew acquaintances, refresh memories and restore spirits faded by time and distance.

On Saturday, November 22, five former La Verne College classmates got together in Rancho Cucamonga to rekindle past friendships and, for a few hours, recount how incidents they encountered on a trip 48 years earlier affected their careers and convictions.

The attendees included Etheldra Watts ’63, David Hollinger ’63, Sandra Groves ’63, Margaret Dewey ’63 and Richard Stern ’63, five of the seven students who experienced episodes of racial prejudice during a trek across country in 1960. Missing were Elaine Harmon ’63, unable to attend due to illness, and Richard Walker ’64, who resides in South Asia. Dan Long, former La Verne faculty member and an advisor on the trip, called from Salem, Ore., to say hello and offer his best wishes to the group.

Recounted in the Winter/Spring 2008 issue of VOICE, their confrontation with intolerance and segregation during separate incidents in Oklahoma and Texas was brought to public attention nearly five decades after they occurred. While unforgotten by those who experienced it, the occurrences had rarely been discussed, even with family.

“Margy and I were always close, but she never said anything to me about (the incidents),” said Judy Stover, Margaret Dewey’s cousin and gracious host to the reunion. “I didn’t know about it until someone told me about the article.”

“I’ve read about such things in books and heard of them in class, but it was a surprise to find out it happened to my grandma,” said Chelsea Nicole Morin, Etheldra’s granddaughter. “She never talked about it before now.”

Seated in a front room, the five chatted, thumbed through copies of the Lambda yearbook and shared where-are-they-now tales of former classmates. They also spoke of the long-ago incidents, offering recollections of personal reactions, feelings of shock, pain, disappointment and anger, and reflected on how the events opened their eyes to larger issues of race and society.

Along the way, friends, family and acquaintances joined in. As afternoon faded into evening, the five continued to recall and reflect while others quietly settled in around the edges, savoring the opportunity to eavesdrop on history.

In the end came laughter and tears as smiles and hugs were exchanged along with current addresses. No breakthroughs were recorded or decisions made, other than to schedule another such gathering the following year, proof that there is still plenty for which to be thankful.

Winter/Spring 2009 Voice 3
City Agrees to Extend Sports Complex Deadline

Acting in its capacity as the La Verne Redevelopment Agency, the La Verne City Council agreed to a five-year extension of the university’s deadline to complete the initial facilities for a joint-use sports complex. By unanimous vote, the council approved an amendment to the Disposition and Development Agreement involving 28 acres of undeveloped land the redevelopment agency sold to the university. The initial agreement required the university to develop a baseball stadium, softball stadium, multipurpose field and tennis courts by 2013, with city recreational programs receiving joint usage as part of a 199-year deal. But due to conditions resulting from the nation’s struggling economy, that deadline has been extended to January 2018.

According to Executive Vice President Phil Hawkey, La Verne’s request for additional time is grounded in the troubles plaguing the financial markets. “It reflects the state of the economy. The city has indicated and we have agreed, as part of the new agreement, to build the baseball, softball and soccer fields all at one time,” said Hawkey. He added that the university will continue to seek financing and begin construction as soon as possible since future plans for key main campus projects are dependent on the relocation of existing athletic facilities.

Former Israeli Diplomat To Lecture at La Verne

Asher Naim, retired Israeli diplomat, internationally recognized human rights activist and noted author will discuss the plight and rescue of Ethiopian Jews during a March 5 lecture in La Fetra Auditorium. Part of the International Studies Institute’s “Hot Spots” series, the talk will begin at 10:30 a.m. The lecture is open to the public and admission is free.

As Israel’s ambassador to Ethiopia in 1990-91, Naim played a leading role in Operation Solomon, during which 14,200 Ethiopian Jews were safely airlifted from Addis Ababa to Israel in just 25 hours. His lecture will include personal recollections of the operation, the integration of those rescued into Israeli society, and an update on Israel’s Ethiopian population today. Naim’s visit is made possible by the International Studies Institute in conjunction with the Rhoda Kachuck Jewish Studies Fund. Kachuck, a professor of English at La Verne for 28 years, taught courses on Shakespeare, 20th Century Drama, the American Stage, Comedy/Tragedy, and Jewish Literature before retiring in May 2000.

University Hosts Event For School Counselors

More than 150 secondary school and talent search counselors visited the university on January 30th to take part in “Share Learn Connect,” a one-day conference sponsored by the Western Association for College Admission Counseling. The program, featuring 24 presenters, was designed to allow professionals working with high school students to share their experiences, learn new ideas and connect with colleagues in an effort to help young people gain access to a college education.

“We are proud to have had so many accomplished and dedicated counselors visit La Verne,” La Verne Director of Admissions Chris Krzak said. They are the people who influence college-bound students, so opening our campus to them by hosting a WACAC conference provided a first-hand opportunity to see our facilities and learn more about the collegiate experience we offer here.”

Student Videos Earn Festival Screenings

Two videos produced by La Verne students have been selected for screening at the 11th annual Smogdance Film Festival. Gina Sandoval
**La Verne Mayor Says Commencement Speech Might Be Public Finale**

In one of his last public addresses as mayor of the City of La Verne, Jon Blickenstaff '66 gave the commencement speech during the final ceremony of the university's 2009 Winter Commencement on Saturday, Jan. 31. During his talk, he encouraged the graduates to make time in their daily routine for “fun, worth, love and freedom,” and to balance each with the others. Blickenstaff, who earned his bachelor’s degree from La Verne, was first elected mayor of his hometown in 1982. He recently announced he will not seek re-election in 2009.

“It was really my pleasure to be able to address the graduates,” Blickenstaff said. “I’ve had a number of speaking engagements of late, but I believe that one will be my last as the mayor. I hope that I gave them advice they can use in their lives.”

Winter Commencement 2009 took place in the university's Sports Science & Athletics Pavilion. With 833 students eligible to take part in one of the day's three ceremonies, each drew capacity crowds to celebrate the graduation festivities. Keynote speakers at the earlier ceremonies included Lanney Mayer, assistant professor of education and regional director for the Teacher Education Program and Services Master’s Program at the university’s Valencia location, and Murli Tolaney, Chair Emeritus of Montgomery Watson Harza (MWH), a privately owned global company specializing in water and energy consulting, environmental engineering, management, technology and construction.

**Professor Receives Rotary Club Award**

Issam Ghazzawi, associate professor of management, recently received the Paul Harris Fellow Award from Rotary International. The presentation, which took place during a meeting of Pomona Rotary at the Sheraton Suites Fairplex, honored Ghazzawi for his community service initiatives helping underserved/first generation students. Ghazzawi, who first joined the La Verne faculty in 1999, is director of the university’s REACH Summer Business Camp and advisor to the award-winning SIFE (Students in Free Enterprise) team.

The Paul Harris Fellow is the highest award presented in Rotary. Created in 1957 in memory of Rotary founder Paul Harris, the honor is given to individuals for outstanding contributions to the organization and in recognition of exceptional service to society.
1960s

Joetta Shaw '62 has traveled to all seven continents with her husband Don Shaw. They have two children and three grandchildren. She taught Jr. High for three years and preschool for eighteen. She has since retired in 2000.

Roger Holl '66 is Associate Dean of General Studies at Charter College in Anchorage. He teaches law related courses, Business and Applied Ethics. He is Chief of staff at the 49th Military Police Brigade as well as a State Commissioner of the Alaska Public Officer Commission.

1970s

Craig Enberg '70 & Pam York Enberg have a new grandson named Niko Roy Riley and Craig and Pam state that retirement is just as much fun as being an undergraduate at La Verne!

Michael O'Boyle '72 has retired as Revenue Agent from the IRS after 26 years. He also taught accounting at various community colleges.

Odessa Cleveland '76 became a National Board Certified Teacher in Early Adolescence English Language Arts in 2000. In 2004 she retired from Los Angeles Unified School District after 30 years of service. After retiring, she took a trip around the world in 103 days on the Queen Elizabeth II. She served as a delegate from the United States with the People to People Programs’ English Language and Literature delegation to South Africa (2006) doing research.

John Zaragoza '78 of Oxnard will be seated on the Ventura County Board of Supervisors in January.

Andrew M. Green '79 was announced as the new finance director for Reno, Nevada. He has previously led the finance departments of Rialto and San Bernardino and has 28 years of experience in municipal management. He has a Master’s in Business Administration with honors from University of Phoenix, and a bachelor’s degree in accounting from University of La Verne.

1980s

Rev. Michael Titus '80 will give his first sermon as pastor of Sunnyslope Church. He most recently served as a pastor at the Covington Community Church of the Brethren. He earned a Master’s of Divinity Degree at Bethany Theological Seminary after earning a bachelor's degree at the University of La Verne.

John Rome '80 is the new head coach for Glendale Community College. After playing collegiate football at the University of La Verne, where he earned several defensive honors, Rome looked toward a career in coaching.

Mario Capozzoli '85 graduated from the University of La Verne with a bachelor’s in Political Science. He has recently purchased a farm in northern New England, sitting next to a lake and under a ski resort, where he grows seasonal organic vegetables, apples, and blueberries. In the off season he consults and spends time on the cooking staff at a restaurant in France.

Leo Sayles '89 earned his 100th victory as a collegiate volleyball coach as he led the Bryan College Volleyball team to a 27-9 record and a second place finish in the Appalachian Athletic Conference. The team, which competes in the NAIA and the NCCAA, was ranked in the NCCAA top ten nationally for the third straight year. Sayles completed his fifth season with the Dayton, Tenn., program, and ranks as the third-winningest coach in Bryan volleyball history.

1990s

Jennette A. Carrick '92 recently accepted a position as communications officer for the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis in Sacramento. As a communications officer, Jenny leads the effort to develop and grow visibility for the new school and its leaders as well as developing the strategy for the school’s communications and marketing efforts.

Nancy Hite '92 has continued to grow in her career since graduating from La Verne with her master's degree in business management. She is now the Director of Contracted Health Quality for the Health Care Authority, State of Washington. She attributes her success to the quality education she received from the University of La Verne.

Christopher Pierce '94 was one of 10 new vice presidents with wide range of expertise in government markets elected by a global strategy and technology-consulting firm. Pierce holds a master’s degree in Business Organization and Systems Management from the University of La Verne and a bachelor’s degree in oceanography from the U.S. Naval Academy.

John M. Pethel '94 LCDR, USM is serving in Afghanistan as a mentor to the Afghan National Army. He has been stationed outside Kandahar in southern Afghanistan since March 2008 and has been working with the Afghans. Additionally, he was selected for Command-at-Sea and expects to start the Surface Warfare officer training pipeline in 2010.

Marissa Espinoza '94 is the new Wraparound Program Manager at Casa Pacifica in Camarillo. The Wraparound Program is a community based mental health program which strives to maintain the child or adolescent in their families and communities through intensive interventions and support. Marissa accepted this new challenge after 14½ years of working in residential treatment facilities for severely emotionally disturbed children and adolescents as well as their families in Los Angeles County.

Mike Bridges '96 has been awarded the U.S. State Department's Superior Honor Award for his service on an Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team in Iraq from spring 2007 to spring 2008. Col. Bridges is currently serving as the Director of Logistics/G4 with the Alaska Army National Guard.

2000s

Clyde Weems III '03 was married a year ago. He is now living in New York where he works as a social worker. He also coaches and plays in the ABA pro basketball league.

Dr. Christian R. Kueng '03 recently joined the management team of the Anaheim City School District as the Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services.

Sal Marenco '03 and Sarah Negrete '03 & '05 were married on Saturday August 16, 2008, in San Dimas. Sal and Sarah shared this special day with their family and some of their closest friends from La Verne. Ben Stevens '04, Jesse Garcia '04, Amanda Hubbard '06, Rosie Hodges '06 and Olivia Aguirre '04.

Anne Rhice '04 has been promoted to banking officer at BB&T. She earned her bachelor's degree in Public Administration at the University of La Verne.

Adonis Phillips '07 accepted on April 2, 2008, a new Regional Services position as the Southern California Metro Director for DeVry University.

Cynthia Lopez '08 was honored by The California Association of School Counselors with the Donald G. Hays Professional Recognition Award for Outstanding Counselor of the Year at the organization’s annual conference recently in Anaheim. She completed a master’s degree in education counseling and a Pupil Personnel Services Credential at the University of La Verne’s satellite campus in Oxnard.

Rick Garcia '08 graduated from the University of La Verne with a B.A. in Philosophy and Religion. He began work at USC in October 2008 as Assistant Director, Graduate and International Student Admissions.

Little Leos

Craig Scott Carstens '94 is honored to announce the birth of his son Joshua Carstens on August 21, 2008.

Peter Hopping '96 and his wife Heather welcomed their第三 daughter Sage Elizabeth on October 30, 2008.

In Memoriam

Clayton Shehorn '39 passed away on July 15. He graduated with a B.A. in English and was a four-letter athlete. He attended his last football game at the age of 90 last year. Clayton spoke frequently of his college experience at La Verne, always with fond remembrances. La Verne was the
 Verne Orr

After a lifetime of service to his city and country, Verne Orr, the former California Finance Department director and U.S. Air Force secretary, passed away November 27, 2008, at the age of 92. He served as the Dean of the College of Business and Public Management at La Verne from 1999 to 2002. Verne went on to complete his Ph.D. at Claremont Graduate University in 2005 at the age of 88.

Prior to his appointment to the Dean’s position, Verne had distinguished careers in both business and public service. Following his Navy service in World War II, Verne joined his father’s automobile dealership in Pasadena and later became president of Investors Savings and Loan. In 1967, Verne became the Director of the California Department of Motor Vehicles and in 1970 he was appointed Director of Finance for the State of California.

Verne served as a member of the University of California Board of Regents and, following the election of Ronald Reagan as President, Verne was named Secretary of the Air Force. He served in that position until 1985.

Vince Ordonez, Jr. ’92 & ’94 passed away November 1999. He graduated from the University of La Verne with a B.S. in business management and a master’s in business organization.

Rebecca Sue Britt ’98 & ’00 passed away on August 4, 2007 due to lung cancer. She loved teaching and taught at Chapman and UVC.

Leonard Lund ’01 passed away on April 26, 2007. He received his bachelor’s degree in business administration at the University of La Verne.

Kyhl Smeby ’75

Longtime Board of Trustees member Kyhl Smeby passed away at his Pasadena home on January 14 following a period of declining health. He was 88.

A graduate of La Verne, Kyhl was elected to the Board of Trustees in 1976. He served as the Chair of the Board from 1980 to 1989 and continued his service as a Board member at-large and a member of the Executive Committee until his death. He was awarded the honorary degree Doctor of Humane Letters by his alma mater in 1983. In 1986 he retired as Executive Vice President of the Bank of America after 46 years of service.

Kyhl was a champion of higher education. In addition to his service to La Verne, he served on the Board of the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena; as a member of the Executive Committee of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities; as a Director and Chairman of the Independent Colleges of Southern California; and as a public member of the California Post Secondary Education Commission.

As an active community leader, Kyhl chaired the Board of Directors of KCET Public Television; was a Director of the Golden State Minority Foundation and a Director and Chair of the Music Center Opera Association. He also served as President of the Greater Los Angeles Visitors and Convention Bureau.

Kyhl was an active advocate for La Verne and was credited with opening the doors to many of the California foundations that have given generously to the University over the past two decades.

A Pasadena resident for more than 50 years, Kyhl was an avid golfer and philatelist. He enjoyed the symphony and opera, and traveled with family and friends.
Providing La Verne’s excellent teachers, such as Dr. Glenn Gamst, with what they need is what the campaign has been all about.

University of La Verne photo
Paving The Way For Excellence

Success in the largest capital campaign in school history positions La Verne to serve tomorrow’s outstanding students

By Rusty Evans

With the successful completion of the University of La Verne’s $42 million “Building On Excellence” campaign, University President Steve Morgan insisted on a celebration.

But only a brief one.

“We’ve already started talking about the next campaign for the university,” Morgan said. “If this one is successful at $42 million, we probably ought to have an $84 million campaign for the next one.”

And so it goes for institutions of higher learning. No matter how old the school, no matter how steeped in tradition, there is a constant need to improve, to change with the times, to reinvent facilities and enhance curricula to meet the needs of an ever-changing society and its educational pursuits.

An $84 million campaign? The thought is no more daunting than that of the $42 million campaign when it began five years ago. It was a mountain to climb, but a necessary one if La Verne is to remain competitive in the marketplace of higher education.

“It really helps to have a campaign because it really motivates and gives us a rallying point,” Morgan said. “We articulate what our needs are, we state a goal, and we challenge our donors to help us meet that goal or exceed that goal. And so it’s important for institutions to cycle campaigns over their lifetime and we felt it was time for a campaign, there were certainly needs and it was time to move up a notch.”

A long list of objectives was composed, chief among them:

- Enhance the campus by updating facilities and infrastructure
- Furnish the tools needed to prepare La Verne graduates for future challenges
- Increase and encourage types of research that will affect lives and learning
- Support the university’s belief in the importance of diversity
- Provide vital financial assistance to those seeking to further their education
- Strengthen La Verne’s intercollegiate athletic program
- Expand the university’s leadership and legacy

Sizable grants from the W.M. Keck Foundation and the Fletcher Jones Foundation in the second half of 2005 paved the way for the University of La Verne to establish a Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) facility on campus.

Such progress provides La Verne students use of research-grade instrumentation as they work closely with university faculty members, and serves to better equip students as they prepare to enter the work force or attend graduate school.

The Keck Foundation made a grant of $500,000, which was followed by a $236,000 grant from The Fletcher Jones Foundation.

“We’re very grateful to both foundations for partnering with the university to bring our students this crucial technology,” said Natural Science Division chair Robert Neher. “The NMR facility gives us a much-needed analytical tool and provides a wide range of new research opportunities in chemistry, biology and physics.”

Milestone #1

The Building on Excellence Campaign proved to be a major milestone in the 117-year history of the university, with an unprecedented outpouring of financial support for its growth. The past five years have been marked by milestones that reflect the excellence and growth of the University of La Verne. Those are highlighted in the pages ahead. Follow the campaign with these milestones of achievement.

Continued on 10
Land Acquisition in Partnership With City Provides Space For Future Athletic Facilities

With a shared vision of the need for expanded space and resources, the University of La Verne and the City of La Verne formed a cooperative alliance that could prove to be a victory for local athletes of all ages.

On June 9, 2005, escrow closed on nearly 31 acres of undeveloped land in the southern part of La Verne. The purchase of the property previously held by the Metropolitan Water District (MWD) was made by the city’s redevelopment agency in cooperation with the La Verne City Council at a cost of $4.34 million dollars.

The city and the University of La Verne will jointly hold the largest segment of the property — about 27 acres located south of Arrow Highway and east of Wheeler Avenue — splitting the $2.8 million price tag. Both sides envision developing the area into expanded recreational and athletic facilities, a partnership that will enhance opportunities for community youth teams as well as the university’s intercollegiate and intramural programs.

City and university officials have agreed to continue to work together on finalizing plans for the shared portion of the property. The newly acquired land, plus an adjacent 20 acres owned by the university, were incorporated into the university’s Master Plan. No firm timetable for development or construction has been finalized.

A separate 3.7-acre piece of land directly adjacent to Wheeler Avenue also was bought by the city’s redevelopment agency from MWD as part of the property acquisition package. The agency paid $1.54 million for the land, which includes two finished lots.

In 2002, the university acquired a 20-acre parcel of unimproved land directly adjacent to the MWD property being purchased jointly with the city. This acreage is about one-half mile from the university’s main campus. The La Verne student population has grown significantly in recent years, straining available classroom space and parking. Acquiring access to the MWD land, combined with its existing 20 acres, will allow for future development of the university within its traditional home city.

in the field of education

- Sustain the growth and development of the La Verne College of Law

But the centerpiece of this capital campaign is exactly that: a new campus center building that would serve as the new hub of activity on campus. Spurred by the generous donation of Board of Trustees member Michael Abraham and the “Abraham Challenge,” the university charged ahead with fundraising efforts that secured more than $27 million during the campaign’s first two-and-a-half years, its “quiet phase.”

Then, before a record-setting President’s Dinner Gala crowd at the Ontario Convention Center, on Saturday, Jan. 28, 2006, Morgan formally announced the $42 million “Building on Excellence” Campaign. A five-minute multimedia presentation heralded start of the public phase of the five-year capital campaign, which was aimed at expanding and enriching the university’s educational legacy.

Part of the funds secured during the campaign’s initial two-and-a-half years included more than $17.8 million raised as part of the Campus Center Project. Intended to establish a new crossroads for the university, the Campus Center Project featured construction of the Abraham Campus Center, creation of the Frank & Nadine Johnson Family Plaza, and renovation of the Sports Science & Athletics Pavilion (formerly known as the “Super Tents”).

A whopping 302 faculty and staff members gave during the 5-year campaign period, contributing $1.9 million. There were three gifts of more than $100,000 from current or former faculty and staff.

While all the construction projects served as visible signs of progress and growth, it was the unseen, the programs and services and the addition of faculty and the strengthening of financial aid to students that provided the true impetus for the campaign.

“I think the University of La Verne is about continuous improvement in a sense, always pushing our target out a little beyond our grasp, and we should never be satisfied with where we are,” Morgan said. “We celebrate our successes but then we should look at how we get better in the future. How do we improve the teaching and learning experience? How do we improve the services for our students to ensure that we are giving our students everything we possibly can in terms of their academic experience and for the younger students, particularly, their co-curricular experience? The whole university experience,”
whether it’s an 18-year-old or a 55-year-old, how do we maximize their experience?

Morgan said one of the most important duties of a university is to constantly evaluate the changing academic climate, as it relates to the needs of society.

“If you look back over decades, you see that the needs of society have changed, and La Verne has to change to meet those needs and the education it provides for its students,” he said. “So basically, I’m never satisfied. I never think we’re doing things as well as we could do them, but it’s a sequential journey. It’s one step at a time. You can’t leap from Point A to Point C without going through Point B. Each success, each opportunity we have to strengthen is to take another step in our journey.”

One step, during this campaign, has been an increase in financial aid so that students of all economic backgrounds can attend La Verne. The university has also added faculty to bolster programs to serve growing numbers of students. And, it has added staff, to strengthen the teaching and learning process.

So, as he watches the finishing touches being applied to the marvelous new Abraham Campus Center building, Morgan, a third-generation graduate of the university, can take a moment and be proud. During those times when he doesn’t have to be the face and the voice of the university, he can enjoy the moment and know that the school he loves is headed in the right direction.

His own private celebration.

“There is a lot of satisfaction in seeing La Verne get better,” Morgan said. “That’s what the building is about, that’s what the campaign was about, that’s what adding faculty is about. It’s making La Verne better and better and I see a lot of satisfaction in that, and we as a community need to take time to celebrate that.”

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**University of La Verne College of Law Granted ABA Accreditation**

When in 2006 the American Bar Association granted provisional accreditation to the University of La Verne College of Law, it became the only ABA-accredited law school in Inland Southern California, the fastest growing metropolitan region in the United States.

The announcement came at a time when San Bernardino and Riverside County courts reported a severe shortage of judicial officers and Inland Southern California’s population was significantly underrepresented by legal professionals when compared to neighboring metropolitan regions.

Many Inland legal professionals believe the growth of the College of Law mirrors the development of the region.

The College of Law’s quest for accreditation began with its application to the ABA in Fall 2005. After an extensive self-study and a positive site visit in September 2005, administrative representatives from the law school and La Verne’s main campus appeared before the ABA’s 19-member Accreditation Committee to present the law school’s credentials for accreditation.

Located in Ontario, the University of La Verne College of Law now serves more than 3.8 million people in the region and an additional 2.2 million people in San Gabriel Valley and Eastern Los Angeles County. It is now accredited by both the American Bar Association and the State Bar of California.

Established in 1970, the College of Law adheres to the ideals and vision of the University of La Verne and is recognized as a progressive school, integrating time-honored methods in teaching the law with the most advanced technology available. Known for its emphasis on advocacy, the law school offers small classes that feature a traditional curriculum and practical skills taught by respected, practice-proven faculty. The faculty approach is grounded in a commitment to ethics and service to the individual students’ needs and the school works to cultivate a prominent and supportive alumni network.
Years from now, those reclining in comfort in the University of La Verne’s newest building, the Abraham Campus Center, will be oblivious to the struggles, the deadlines, the pressure to raise the money to erect the gleaming three-story building, as well as the other two components of the Campus Center Project.

Those behind the scenes, the driving forces of the project, will remember, maybe smile and shake their heads. Somehow, we did it.

“There were several of us involved in leadership roles in this campaign who on many occasions said, ‘I have no idea where this amount of money will come from,’ and we really didn’t have it clearly in sight,” University President Steve Morgan said. “So we decided that we would put our heads down and move forward and we would ask everyone we could think of to participate in this campaign, and in a campaign, along the way you have a few disappointments, a few people you thought were really going to step up with major gifts and either chose not to or weren’t able to.

“But you also have a lot of pleasant surprises, people you thought you had pegged for a smaller gift and they ended up saying, ‘No, no, we want to do more for this campaign.’ So, it was a combination of some disappointments and some very pleasant surprises.”

None more pleasant than Board of Trustees member Michael Abraham’s $4 million
conversion of the Super Tents into the Sports Science & Athletics Pavilion transformed the futuristic structure into a state-of-the-art sports complex.

conditional pledge, way back in 2003, which lit the fuse on the largest capital campaign in the school's 117-year history. “The Abraham Challenge,” if successful, would bring in $8 million, because Abraham’s pledge required a matching total of $4 million from the rest of the Board of Trustees. The Abraham Challenge was met and Abraham and his wife, Sara, chose to give an additional $2.5 million to the project that would create a sparkling new meeting place on campus.

"From the day I joined the board I sensed that this university lacked a student union/campus center, something I thought was going to be essential," said Abraham, who also said the La Verne campus reminded him of the UC Santa Barbara campus at which he spent so much time as a student in the 1950s. “The whole purpose of the challenge was to get this done sooner rather than later. I didn’t want this to go on for 10 or 15 years. I wanted to see it built while I’m alive.”

With such a bold jump-start, those in leadership decided to create an outdoor gathering place for students, faculty and visitors to complement the new building and to renovate the Super Tents, which served as the campus center previously. Expanding the scope of the project meant expanding the budget, which was set at about $12 million originally for the Campus Center building. Rising costs in building materials and adding features to the project pushed the fundraising objective to more than twice the original figure.

But La Verne supporters kept stepping up. The Board of Trustees donated more than $13 million, including $2 million from Nadine Johnson and $1 million from Benjamin Harris. Faculty and staff gave at an unprecedented rate.

Current board member and former chair Jim Long and his wife, Marie, made the contribution that pushed the total past the $16 million Abraham Challenge mark. The couple, who reside in Upland, had already made a sizable donation earlier in the campaign. On October 25, 2005, the Longs were approached with the opportunity to provide the goal-breaking gift 11 days ahead of the target date. “It was both a pleasure and an honor,” Jim Long said.

The Longs’ gift escalated campaign momentum. In the days since it became known that the challenge goal had been met, there was an upsurge in gifts and pledges from members of the campus community as well as supporters throughout the country.

“The excitement this has generated is fantastic,” said Jean Bjerke, Vice President of University Advancement. “We saw a wonderful response from people who wanted to be part of this historic and unprecedented effort.”

University Master Plan gets approval from City of La Verne

Years of study, discussion and review came to fruition in January 2007 when the City of La Verne approved the University of La Verne’s Campus Master Plan. By unanimous vote, the city council passed the extensive proposal, which serves as an overview of the university’s projected growth, anticipated development and necessary facility enhancement.

“This is a good outcome for the city and the university,” La Verne Mayor Jon Blickenstaff said after the vote. “The community and the college are linked by a shared history. Whatever helps the university will also benefit La Verne.”

The Campus Master Plan is designed to enrich and revitalize school facilities and strengthen its infrastructure, allowing the institution to evolve as it adapts to meet its educational mission. The Campus Center Project, one of the plan’s key components, features construction of the $26.1 million Sara and Michael Abraham Campus Center building.

Overall, the Campus Master Plan outlines a vision for the university that will allow it to remain a viable, competitive institution that can supply the academic and collegiate experience sought by prospective students. It will also help the university continue to be an involved partner with the city, providing benefits and resources that enhance the community’s exceptional quality of life.

continued from 12
THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

The Muriel Pollia Sculpture Garden will take art to higher level at University of La Verne

By Lisa O’Neill Hill

From poets to woodworkers to sculptors, Muriel Pollia supported artists all of her life and felt that communication through the arts was the most powerful form of communication available.

Pollia, a woman of unique vision with myriad talents, was particularly devoted to nurturing young artists and was interested in cutting-edge creative processes.

It’s fitting then that the foundation that bears her name is funding the first public art project at the University of La Verne, a significant milestone in the institution’s already strong commitment to art.

The Muriel Pollia Sculpture Garden, near the Sara & Michael Abraham Campus Center, will make art more accessible and send a message to the community and to current and prospective students about art’s vitality. It will change the landscape of the campus, showcasing the work of Indio artist Phillip K. Smith III, who has won acclaim for his public art projects that combine the precision of geometry with the organic forms in nature.

Smith is creating two pieces – a 54-foot fiberglass sculpture called "Inhale/Exhale" – and another that he has yet to design. Painted a deep red-orange, "Inhale/Exhale" will be striking in size and form, an arresting work of art impossible to overlook. Yet, despite its boldness, Smith created it to complement its surroundings.

The sculpture garden, along with the introduction of a photography major at La Verne, is pushing the campus to the next level in terms of its dedication to art and will help the university showcase its mission in a unique and very public way.

For years, the Harris Gallery, the Carlson Gallery and the Tall Wall Space in the Arts & Communications Building have drawn community members onto campus and have showcased a wide range of work from artists in a variety of media. The galleries, long well-at-
tended, have a strong relationship with the art world in Los Angeles and other dynamic areas, and the art department is considered sophisticated. But the lack of significant outdoor art has felt like a void; the Muriel Pollia Sculpture Garden is expected to be a tremendous beginning to public art on campus.

Artists and non-artists alike are excited by the prospect of elevating the campus’ profile through public art, something that University President Steve Morgan has been interested in for a long time.

“The institution’s willingness and eagerness to pursue this is like electing Barack Obama,” said Gary Colby, professor of photography at the university. “It’s like this amazing, hopeful thing.”

La Verne art professor Ruth Trotter, who chaired a search committee for an artist to create the sculptures, said the committee wanted to find a work of art that represents the future and sets the campus apart in some distinctive way, looking forward. The project sends an important message, particularly to students, she said.

“It says we value art. We value creativity,” Trotter said. “We value the creative spirit. As you know, in this climate, art is often the thing that is set aside and marginalized and we are finally including it in a way that gives it the attention it deserves. I think it’s going to mean a lot to the students and to their sense of value for their chosen career.”

The Muriel Pollia Foundation has provided a major grant of $250,000 to establish the Muriel Pollia Sculpture Garden at the University of La Verne.

University and foundation officials were looking for a “radically inventive public artwork that should connect to the vitality of student life at the new Campus Center.” The artwork should foster dialogue around the ideas it represents and may serve as a catalyst for public art opportunities around campus.

In the course of the search, Trotter and other members of the committee discovered Smith and the innovative work he had been doing in the Coachella Valley.

Smith said he was impressed by what he heard.

“Their concern was the future of art on campus and that it begin around the campus center and that this project be the spark for art on campus,” he said. “They basically said, ‘Let’s not worry so much about the garden, continued on 16
New provost and deans set fresh academic course

As construction on the Campus Center Project proceeded, the university was rebuilding its academic leadership.

After a nationwide search, the University of La Verne chose Dr. Alden Reimonenq to be its chief academic officer, succeeding Richard McDowell as provost.

Reimonenq came to La Verne from California State University, East Bay, where he had most recently served as Dean of the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences. A widely published scholar, Reimonenq is a noted educator, and distinguished himself as an academic leader.

Reimonenq’s first major move was to hire Mark Goor to succeed Leonard Pellicer as dean of the College of Education and Organizational Leadership. Pellicer retired in 2006 following six years as CEOL dean.

Bringing 35 years of experience as an educator, Goor came to La Verne after 13 years at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va. During his tenure at George Mason, he served as a professor of special education, coordinator of the university’s Special Education Program, and as assistant and associate dean for Academic & Student Affairs.

On May 15, 2008, Allen K. Easley was introduced as dean of the College of Law. With nearly 30 years of successful experience in academia and intimate knowledge of the ABA approval process, Easley stepped in to replace Donald J. Dunn, who had passed away four months earlier, and Interim Dean H. Randall Rubin, who served in the law school’s chief post since August 2007 when Dean Dunn began medical leave.

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$250,000 Grant for Sculpture Garden Fits Muriel Pollia's Vision

The Muriel Pollia Foundation has provided a major grant of $250,000 to establish the Muriel Pollia Sculpture Garden at the University of La Verne.

Indio-based artist Phillip K. Smith will install two sculptures, located in close proximity to the Abraham Campus Center, prior to the grand opening of the new building in September. The project will initiate the development of a program of public art on the university’s campus.

Based in Los Angeles, The Muriel Pollia Foundation was founded in 2006 to honor the life and work of Muriel Pollia. Dr. Pollia was a humanitarian and an avid supporter of the arts with a passion for life, creativity and spirituality.

“Dr. Pollia developed a remarkable philosophy and approach to life,” said Jerry D. Luedders, president of the Muriel Pollia Foundation. “She believed that by following the expression of beauty, order and harmony through art, dance, music, mathematics, architecture, design and the like, an artist creates a silent expression of that power which is responsible for its inception through inspiration. The constant awareness of peace, harmony, and beauty is the highest order of consciousness. Like quality and consciousness attract. Communication through the arts and beauty is the most powerful form of communication extant. Dr. Pollia was convinced that as the consciousness of a single individual is raised through these means, the consciousness of humanity is also raised.”

Luedders said the foundation lends its support and encouragement to organizations and institutions that practice and hold such qualities to be honorable and of the highest value and spiritual significance.

“We are hopeful that the public artwork will be a highly visible feature of the campus and may serve as a catalyst for future public art opportunities around the campus,” Luedders said.

The Sculpture Garden will also support the university’s commitment to quality education through exceptional contemporary art and complement its new Campus Center building.

“That new building is probably the most beautiful building in the entire city of La Verne,” said Jay Rodriguez, chairman of The Muriel Pollia Foundation. “I just felt that the sculpture garden would really be a nice complement to the building and that’s why we wanted to appropriate the money.”
A four-year effort by the University of La Verne to fund its Campus Center Project reached a climactic finish on December 30, 2007, as the university officially announced it had achieved its fund-raising goal of $26.1 million for the three-part capital project.

Thanks to a final flurry of contributions in the closing days of 2007, the university was able to realize its objective before the end of the calendar year, thereby meeting conditions to qualify for a $600,000 challenge grant from The Kresge Foundation.

The three-part Campus Center Project encompasses renovations to the Sports Science & Athletics Pavilion (formerly known as the Super Tents), creation of the Frank & Nadine Johnson Family Plaza and construction of the Sara & Michael Abraham Campus Center Building.

The Abraham Campus Center is named in honor of Board of Trustees member Michael Abraham and his wife, Sara, who have pledged $6.5 million toward completion of the three-story, 42,000-square foot facility. The campus center will provide space for educational, recreational and communal endeavors where students, faculty, staff, alumni, family, friends and campus visitors can come together.

When The Kresge Foundation awarded the grant to the university in December 2006, the university was nearly $4.4 million shy of its $26.1 million goal. The time conditions put forth by the challenge grant intensified fund-raising endeavors, which in turn led to a remarkable response of support.

With the goal achieved, construction on the Abraham Campus Center building proceeds, and soon the university will have a sparkling new hub of campus activity.
public art pieces. In Kansas City, Mo., Smith won praise for a 15-foot glowing sculpture, “Transformed Flower,” for the Richard & Annette Bloch Cancer Survivors Park, which he designed to be a positive image of transformation. He recently was short-listed to create a proposal for a piece outside Oklahoma City Hall.

The son of a housing developer and an interior/graphic designer, Smith was born in Los Angeles but moved to the Coachella Valley when he was a child. After graduating from high school, he went to the Rhode Island School of Design, where he earned degrees in architecture and fine arts. He moved back to the Coachella Valley in 2000 and established The Art Office, a multidisciplinary design studio in Indio.

As a teenager, Smith said he couldn’t wait to leave the desert. It wasn’t until Smith was away from the Coachella Valley that he realized what he had taken for granted.

“Think that once the desert gets in your blood, you can’t ever deny it,” he said. “I learned to appreciate it once I was away from it.” After living on the East Coast, Smith said he realized how important it was for him to see the horizon line, to have a sense of space and distance.

“It’s very powerful, I think… long, extensive plains and then one tree or one big boulder or some marker that defines the landscape in a way. The other thing you just cannot deny is the light and the color and warmth of the light. I’m always trying to build in light and shadow in the pieces. I think the desert is very powerful for my understanding of putting objects out into the public realm. I think I have a tendency toward more boldness.”

Yet, Smith is not bold just for the sake of being bold. He says he is acutely aware of creating something that makes sense where it is placed.

That was appealing to University of La Verne Art Professor Ruth Trotter. She said Smith understands the relationship between art and the environment and between art and the existing architecture.

“We felt that was particularly important with this first significant public art piece that the work consider the existing physical properties of the campus,” Trotter said. “It was just very clear that Phillip would be ideal for that.”

“Inhale/Exhale” meshes geometry with growth patterns of nature, a favored theme of Smith’s work. “You have this very controlled, precise, able-to-be-measured thing on one side and then you have this very organic, amoebic growth sort of thing on the other side and I love the idea of meshing those two things together,” he said.

“I think it sends a very powerful statement about what it important of art, he said.

“It has this ability to be very thin and then also very wide and so as you move around it, the piece is always changing,” Smith said. “It looks like it’s breathing. It looks like it’s filling with air and releasing. Giving nature this kind of precision and giving geometry this kind of life, I think is a really exciting intersection.”

Smith has yet to design the second piece but said he thinks he will create something between 10 and 16 feet high, using rusted steel as a finish.

“It’s huge for me, it’s a real honor,” Smith said of being chosen to do the pieces. “What I really enjoy doing in my work is working with cities and clients that have never done this before. There’s this kind of camaraderie that develops; we’re going through this together. We’re both invested. I sort of feel like I’ve become part of the ULV family.”

Smith said everyone he has spoken to at the University of La Verne is excited about the sculptures and eager to see them installed. The university is conveying an important message about the importance of art, he said.

“I think it sends a very powerful statement about the university’s commitment to the art program and a very strong statement about the beauty of the campus,” he said. “Public art on campus in the last decade has become a very cutting-edge thought. I think to know that a school of La Verne’s size is embarking upon that really sends a message to the community and to prospective students.”

University Gets Three Title V Grants in Four Years

In recognition of its continued efforts to actively support and educate students among the community’s underserved populations, University of La Verne was awarded three highly competitive United States Department of Education grants in the span of four years.

The latest, a $3.58 million Title V STEM Grant is a two-year, renewable cooperative federal grant that allows the university to partner with Citrus College, a community college in nearby Glendora. The funds are designed to help students better prepare for their university education in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or “STEM.”

In 2007, the University of La Verne received news of a $2.47 million Title V Developing Hispanic Serving Institution grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The five-year grant serves to enhance programs within the university’s College of Business & Public Management.

In 2005, the university College of Education & Organizational Leadership was awarded a Title V grant.

With the largest segment of Hispanic students of any private college in California, La Verne is strongly committed to maintaining a rich cultural diversity in its student population and among its faculty members. Approximately 39 percent of the university’s traditional-aged undergraduate students are of Hispanic backgrounds.

The latest grant funds programs at La Verne for outreach to high school students to foster an interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM.
A lot can happen in 40 years. People change and develop. Careers commence and succeed. Relationships blossom and mature. Families begin and renew.

In 1968, a collection of talented and motivated students graduated from what was then La Verne College. Inspired by the likes of Bob Neher, Ahmed Ispahani, Kate Hoskins, John Jang and a host of other influential faculty members, they were prepared to enter a changing world during turbulent times and make their mark.

Fast forward four decades and that spirited group is now a collection of highly respected and accomplished achievers. This past October, some of them returned to the La Verne campus to celebrate their 40th reunion, reconnecting with classmates and the institution during an eventful homecoming weekend. And although they have experienced many changes in their lives and lifestyles, each still carries an appreciation for their alma mater and how it helped them become the men and women they are today.

In recognition of the role La Verne played in their lives, the Class of ’68 decided to mark their ruby anniversary year by establishing the university’s first-ever Class Endowed Scholarship Fund. With gifts and pledges totaling nearly $30,000, the group set a goal of $50,000 to be reached by the time of their 50th reunion in 2018.

Each year the fund will award a scholarship to a deserving undergraduate student who needs financial assistance to complete his/her degree. La Verne annually provides more than $14 million in grants and scholarships that in part are made possible by generous gifts from alumni, parents and friends of the university.

Mike Welch, a ’68 graduate who recently returned to La Verne to serve as executive director of annual giving and advancement operations, was a driving force behind both the 40th reunion celebration and the creation of the endowed scholarship fund. He personally connected with classmates and encouraged both their attendance at the reunion festivities and participation in the historic fund-raising project.

In a personal letter to his fellow classmates, Welch wrote: “La Verne is still La Verne. It has not changed its core values. It continues to provide students of all ages the opportunity to better themselves through a values-oriented approach to higher education. All of this is done by a caring faculty and personalized teaching and learning environment.

“La Verne makes a wonderfully positive impact on the lives of current students. It changes lives. It changed mine and I hope it had a positive impact on yours as well.”

One of the most recognizable names on the class roster is that of Steve Morgan, who has spent the past 23 years as La Verne’s president. He echoed Welch’s sentiments and praised all of the Class of ’68 for their eagerness to give back to the university.

“In all modesty, I have to say that we (the Class of ’68) are a great group of people. We had a wonderful experience at what was then La Verne College,” said Morgan. “All of us would say that, looking back on 40 years since graduation, La Verne played a major role in our successes and what we did, professionally and personally. We want to make sure that students in future generations have the same opportunities that we had to be a part of this community. So we decided it was time to try to step up ourselves and do something to make sure students in future generations could be here.”

For more information on the Class of ’68 Endowed Scholarship Fund or to learn how you can establish a similar fund for your graduation class, contact the La Verne Annual Fund at (909) 593-3511 ext. 4685 or e-mail giving@ulv.edu.

— Charles Bentley
Through desire, determination and intensive study, Don Flora has compiled a 269-59 mark and elevated the La Verne women’s volleyball team to the level of a dynasty in NCAA Division III.

By Rusty Evans

The great ones have a way of making it look easy. DiMaggio with a bat. Gretzky with the puck. Montana with the football and the game on the line.

And Flora, with a clipboard.

After 11 seasons under Don Flora, the University of La Verne women’s volleyball program stands among the elite in NCAA Division III. During that span, Flora’s coaching record is 269-59, a mark that measures up to any coach in any sport at any time. He has led the Leopards to a national championship in 2001, West Region titles in 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2008, and is on a streak of nine Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference titles since 2000.

The 2008 season was yet another of Flora’s team flirting with perfection. The Leopards finished 27-3, with one of those losses, to Emory University of Atlanta, coming in a late November match for the Division III national championship. For the fourth time, Flora was named the American Volleyball Coaches Association’s West Region Coach of the Year.

While these credentials would seem to reflect a knack for winning, Flora says most of what he knows as a coach had to be learned.

“I had a fantastic mentor in Jim McGlaughlin, who’s now at University of Washington,” Flora said. “He’s one of the best coaches in the country. He was the head men’s coach at USC when I was the head men’s coach here at La Verne in 1992. I called him, out of the blue, and I said, ‘Hey, I’m this young, dumb buck. I know I don’t know anything, but I love coaching and I’m coaching against USC, Stanford, Hawaii — can I come to your practices and watch?’ ”

Flora also befriended another volleyball legend early on, Pepperdine coach Marv Dunphy.

“He opened his doors and I went down to his practices,” Flora said. “And we’re even playing that guy the same year. And he knows he’s going to beat La Verne at that point, with or without me being in the gym.

“Both Jim and Marv are friends. They are

In 11 seasons as women’s volleyball coach at La Verne, Don Flora has compiled a record of 269-59 and built a dynasty with just the right blend of calm and intensity.

Jan Eichenauer photo

Continued on 23
Don Flora is easygoing off the court, but always finds a way to make his point when his team is on the floor.  

Jan Eichenauer photo
people I call. I sat down with Marv at the Final Four two days ago, we're watching a match and he asks me a question, 'What would you have done different?' I answer him, and he gives me that look, like, we respect each other. I had to learn that. I knew I didn't know stuff. So I had to go find it."

With such diligence, Flora has made himself into an accomplished leader and installed a system that produces championships.

"He has everything that a winning program needs," said Brianna Gonzales, a two-time All-American who as a senior led La Verne to November's championship match. "He has the experience. He has the systems down. He understands the game and has the professional aspect down. And, he handles things well with the players in situations. He has a good system — that's why it has been so successful."

Much of the system is Flora, who has a likability that stems from a positive attitude, honesty, and a genuine caring about others. That has translated into success in recruiting, which is the lifeblood of a collegiate program. With state-of-the-art facilities in a newly renovated Sports Science & Athletics Pavilion and lots of championship banners to adorn its new walls, Flora has an easier sell these days. But with no athletic scholarships to offer and with La Verne's comparatively high admission standards, Flora has to work hard to find athletes who fit a certain profile.

"When you look at the type of kids we recruit, we're not going to get (Penn State All-American) Megan Hodge, who is 6-foot-3 and incredibly developed when it comes to the skills of the game," Flora said. "The development of our athletes is something we pride ourselves in, in this program. I could tell you a hundred stories about players we've seen develop in our program."

One of them is Gonzales.

Gonzales finished off her career at La Verne last fall with a season that rivals that of any player in school history. The 5-foot-10 outside hitter earned just about every award possible: SCIAC Player of the Year, First Team All-American, West Region MVP, NCAA Division III Championships All-Tournament Team.

"Her freshman year, she works her way into starting, just in the front row," Flora said. "Her sophomore year she makes all-conference second team, plays a little front row. Then, from her sophomore year, she goes out and figures some things out, gets better and keeps training. Development. So, there's La Verne. We're developing this athlete, this person who understands the demands of the job and is willing to do it. So, somewhere in there, we're doing something to get them to buy into that."

The selling starts with recruiting, which begins in earnest after the season's final match. From September through November Flora teaches, preaches, demands a 100 percent team pursuit of the goal. But once the last ball has hit the floor, a decidedly individual competition begins — Flora against every other coach trying to land the best young volleyball players in the country.

"When you talk about recruiting, they come in and we say, 'This is who we are. These are our facilities, these are our players,' " Chidester said. "The girls are open and honest with them, you know, they're part of a family and a lot of people buy into it. I like to have the recruits just go with the girls by themselves because I think it's important that they not feel the pressure of the coaches being around, and they'll ask some of the questions they think are stupid questions but they're not."

"We compete hard every day for players," Flora said. "I come in the office every day and I understand that I have to get better today. I have today only. So my job is to get myself or this program better today. So I make sure I do my due diligence within the recruiting realm — because that's the thing I can control the most. So we compete for athletes by trying to have them understand why this program is unique and what are the traits that will help them become what they want to become."

What attracts volleyball players to La Verne is the same thing that attracts non-volleyball players: a small-town atmosphere, small class sizes and big-time academic achievement. The term student-athlete stands for just that at La Verne. Flora and his assistants, Erika Chidester and Allison Lawrence, sell recruits on a college experience in which they will make a real connection — with their coaches, professors, teammates and fellow students.

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What recruits find is a tight network among the players on the team, and family isn’t too strong a word to describe the team’s cohesiveness.

“They live together, they eat, sleep and play volleyball together, go to classes and go out on the weekends,” Chidester said. “I think that’s normal, but what I’m noticing is that it’s not like that at a lot of schools. I think that sets up family and chemistry on the court and it’s reflected off the court and that’s what makes us champions. It’s easy to go to the gym every day for your two-hour practice, compete and then go home. But it’s great to have that sense of the bond and the actual caring and being able to go to your teammate when your parents live out of state and say, ‘I need to have a family this weekend.’ I think that is what a lot of teams miss out on.”

While the bond between La Verne teammates is strong, it doesn’t diminish the desire for individual playing time, and there is fierce competition within “phases” in which Flora and his staff evaluate. Flora calls it a system — one, he says, that he could employ elsewhere and be successful, should he ever move on. He stops short of calling it a formula for success, but to listen to Flora talk about the greatest secret to his success is to hear someone who has it down to a science.

“If we do our due diligence, like we did this year, we keep studying the numbers in seven- to 10-day phases,” Flora said. “When one of those phases is done, then we’ll start over and say, ‘Let’s not get caught up in these being our starting six.’

So, we finish on a Saturday night and we don’t play again until next Friday, let’s study this next phase: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. Who’s the best during that phase? Then, we come back and tell them. And now, the No. 2 player is just champing at the bit to be No. 1. So No. 1 is thinking, ‘I better practice hard too, because my No. 1 is not very solidified.’ All of a sudden, No. 2 gets a little time in the game and she plays well. Well, now No. 1’s really feeling like she better train harder and the harder we train, the more we compete. So, our system is that we try to make every day matter. And we try to understand the demands of the job, that, every day you can get a little better.”

But the reason the system will never make the textbooks is the presence of the “X” factor — Flora. Volleyball is an explosive, intense game, but with the La Verne team, Flora sets the tone.

“He talks a lot about intensity and calm,” Lawrence said. “That’s one of the cues he gives the girls during matches and during stressful times on and off the court. I think he embodies that well and he helps the players relax while at the same time holding them to a standard most people wouldn’t be able to relax about. It’s that yin and yang sort of thing where it creates a good balance that the girls can feel comfortable in but it also pushes them out of their comfort zone.”

While opportunities to coach at “higher” levels and make more money abound for coaches as successful as Flora has been, he says he’s comfortable right where he is, for now. He grew up in La Verne, and, like many family members before him, got his degree at the University of La Verne. He lives in La Verne with his wife, Jeanne, who is a professor at the university, and his two daughters, Annika and Alexis.

“The right conversations have happened, to look at other opportunities, but there’s something very special in what I have,” Flora said. “The balance of life is really important. Here, I have the opportunity to coach at the highest level of Division III, and what we’re doing is very transferable. I could coach anywhere.

“Yet, there’s something to what is good in life and what I have here. I have a program in its own little world, so I feel good about the ability to be in my history. I think that’s the best way to put it. I have a history. Homecoming here is meaningful and alumni games are like a reunion, so that makes it very special, just to be a part of this history.”
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